

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The specification has been amended to correct a minor typographical error. Also, Claims 17 and 18 which have been withdrawn from further consideration as being directed to the non-elected species have been amended without narrowing the claim scope to ensure consistency with respect to language used in the independent claim.

Claims 1 and 12 have been amended as discussed below in more detail, and new Claims 19-26 have been added. Claims 1-6 and 12-19 remain readable on the elected species, and new Claims 19-22, 25 and 26 are readable on the elected species.

The only issue raised in the Official Action involved the rejection of Claims 1-6 and 12-16 on the basis of the disclosure contained in U.S. Patent No. 5,685,581 to *Kritzler et al.* That rejection is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

The claims at issue in this application are directed to a vehicle door handle device. As recited in independent Claim 1, the vehicle door handle device is comprised of a frame equipped on a vehicle door panel, and a handgrip having one end portion rotatably mounted on the frame and a second end portion linked with a door lock mechanism, with the handgrip being rotatable within a predetermined angle to operate the door lock mechanism and effect opening of the vehicle door when the operation portion of the handgrip is moved to rotate the handgrip relative to the frame. The projection is formed on the frame or the first end portion of the handgrip while a groove is formed on the other

of the frame and the first end portion of the handgrip. The projection is positioned in the groove to move within the groove when the operation portion of the handgrip is moved to rotate the handgrip relative to the frame. The projection is engageable with the groove periphery to inhibit dislocation of the handgrip from the frame.

Referring to Claim 12, the claimed vehicle door handle device comprises a frame and a handgrip mounted on the frame by inserting the handgrip into the frame in an insertion direction. The handgrip possesses a first end portion rotatable relative to the frame about a rotation center portion and second end portion forming an operation portion linked with a door lock mechanism. The handgrip is rotatable relative to the frame within a predetermined angle at the rotation center portion to operate the door lock mechanism and effect opening of the vehicle door when the second end portion is moved away from the frame. A projection and a groove are provided between the frame and the grip, with the projection being positioned in the groove and being movable in the groove during rotation of the handgrip and being engageable with the boundary of the groove in the insertion direction of the handgrip.

The Official Action observes that *Kritzler et al.* discloses a vehicle door latch actuating handle provided with a projection and a groove as recited in independent Claims 1 and 12. Other than a general reference to Fig. 6 of *Kritzler et al.*, the Official Action is not entirely clear with respect to the features disclosed in *Kritzler et al.* which are interpreted as corresponding to the claimed projection and groove that interact in the claimed manner. It appears that perhaps the Official Action is referring to the laterally

projecting barb or ridge 10 that engages the recess 16 of the fork 6 in *Kritzler et al.* As discussed near the bottom of column three of *Kritzler et al.*, when the handle 2 is pivoted outwardly, the barb or ridge 10 engages the recess 16 to lock the handle 2 to the pivot 5. *Kritzler et al.* points out that with the barb or ridge 10 in engagement with the recess 6, the handle 2 can be moved longitudinally off the pivot 5 only through deformation and/or destruction of the parts forming the handle assembly. As described in *Kritzler et al.*, this construction prevents a would-be-thief from prying out the front end of the handle 2 to remove the front end of the handle from the pivot 5.

One of the differences associated with the vehicle door handle device of the present invention and the disclosure contained in *Kritzler et al.* is that the pin and groove engage one another when the handgrip has not been rotated relative to the frame. Claims 1 and 12 have been amended to define, in combination with the other claimed features, this characteristic. This claimed construction is quite different from the handle disclosed in *Kritzler et al.* where the barb or ridge 10 only engages the recess 16 when the handle 2 is pivoted outwardly. Further, considering the problem sought to be addressed by the particular construction of the vehicle door latch actuating handle described in *Kritzler et al.*, it would not have been obvious to modify the disclosed construction to result in a vehicle door handle device similar to that associated with the present invention in which the projection and groove are engageable with one another when the hand grip has not been rotated relative to the frame.

New independent Claim 19 defines that the vehicle door handle device comprises a frame equipped on a door panel of a vehicle door, and a handgrip mounted on the frame through insertion of the handgrip into the frame, with the handgrip having a first end portion rotatable relative to the frame about a rotation center portion and a second end portion forming an operation portion linked with a door lock mechanism. The handgrip is positioned in an initial non-operated position in which the second end portion is not moved away from the frame and is rotatable relative to the frame within a predetermined angle about the rotation center portion when the second end portion is moved away from the frame to operate the door lock mechanism and effect opening of the vehicle door. In addition, a projection and a groove are provided between the frame and the handgrip. The projection is positioned in the groove both in the initial non-operated position of the handgrip and during rotation of the handgrip relative to the frame as the second end portion of the handgrip is moved away from the frame. In the handle disclosed in *Kritzler et al.*, the barb or ridge 10 is not positioned in the recess 16 both in the initial non-operated position of the handgrip and during rotation of the handgrip as the second end portion of the handgrip is moved away from the frame.

The dependent claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependence upon allowable independent claims. The dependent claims also define further distinguishing characteristics associated with the claimed door handle device. For example, dependent Claims 2 and 13 define that the frame is comprised of first and second base members that are separate and spaced apart from one another. The Official Action observes that Fig. 1

of *Kritzler et al.* discloses these claimed features. However, Fig. 1 does not illustrate first and second base members that are separate and spaced apart from one another to form the frame.

New dependent Claims 25 and 26 define that the groove is arc-shaped and possesses a center of curvature that is concentric with the rotation center portion/rotation center. The device disclosed in *Kritzler et al.* does not embody such a feature.

In light of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of record and allowance of this application are earnestly solicited.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application, the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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